She Was a Colorful Teacher

C. K. 'Ken' Shroyer
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My favorite teacher was something special. She was my aunt on my Mother’s side and the very first teacher I ever had. I really believe that I got more from Aunt Eula than I ever did from any 10 books I’ve read. You know, to be a real good teacher one must first be a good human being.

Actually, Aunt Eula was a diplomat, a practical nurse, a decorator, a fight referee and a politician all rolled up into one neat, pretty person. She was really a psychiatrist without a couch, a babysitter to us beginners, a nurse for all our aches and pains and a quiz program expert to eight different grades in a western country school.

Her days were filled with school bells—young chatter—chalk dust—waving hands—questions—and worried parents. No, really, my parents didn’t worry when we were in that rural school some 60 years ago. They knew we were safe and would get the best instruction and Christian foundation any kid could ever possibly get, back then.

Aunt Eula had to know how to blow small noses, teach in fractions, put on galoshes, find lost mittens in dark cloak rooms—and make parents feel good at parent / teacher meetings. She could quickly stoke up that old pot belly coal burning stove located in the center of our one room classroom, and she could fix the hinge on the front door when it banged loose on a windy day.

Yep! Aunt Eula was the future of the world with a ruler in her hand—she was progress with a pencil in back of her ear—she was underpaid, unappreciated at times, harried and truly overworked. But she gained her pay in special satisfaction. Secretly she admitted, “I have the greatest job of all.”

She knew all about baseball—grasshoppers—little boys—snakes—young love—and how to live three months of the year without a paycheck. She could be found after school taking aspirin, picking up spitballs, cleaning the blackboards, rehearsing plays and just sitting at her desk waiting for strength to get home.

Aunt Eula held the history of the world in the palm of her hands those first four years out there in that little one room school. Too bad she’s not still teaching. We don’t have schools like that any more to turn this world back around. She’s retired now, in her 90’s and lives in the big city. May God continue to watch over her and keep her. Thanks, Aunt Eula, for all the things and lessons you gave to us.

(C.K. 'Ken' Shroyer is an Oklahoma University graduate, School of Business Administration, and a retired senior citizen. He made his debut in the Fall 1990 issue of Westview. He received his second Golden Poet Award recently. He and his wife Reta make their home in Weatherford, OK.)